FBI Pitted Communists, Mafia, Attorney General Levi Reveals

5/23/75

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Attorney General Edward H. Levi yesterday disclosed the existence of five more FBI counterintelligence programs, including one "aimed at putting organized crime elements in competition with the Communist Party USA" to disrupt each other's activities.

Levi has asked the Justice Department Civil Rights Division to determine whether the latest disclosures of these FBI programs, which started in 1956 and were called Cointelpro, involved the violation of any person's civil rights by the FBI.

The disclosures yesterday, made in a letter from Levi to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Peter W. Rodino Jr. (D-N.J.), bring the total of publicly known Cointelpro projects to 12. Justice Department spokesman Robert Havel said that Levi could not be sure that the FBI did not conduct more Cointelpro operations, which the FBI said ended in 1971.

The Justice Department revealed last November that it had conducted seven Cointelpro projects to gather intelligence, disrupt and harass various groups and individuals, including the Communist Party USA, the Socialist Workers Party, the New Left, white hate groups and black extremists. The FBI also conducted special operations and espionage activities against foreign intelligence services and groups under Cointelpro.

The latest disclosures also

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showed that the FBI tried to disrupt the activities of "militant groups which sought Puerto Rican independence" and conducted three other programs classified as secret because they involved aliers foreign groups in this country or "foreign - dominated" groups. Levi did not identify the groups or individuals in his letter to Rodino.

The program designed to pit the Communist Party and Mafia groups, given the name "operation Hoodwink," was conducted from October 1966 to July, 1968, Levi said.

On four occasions during that period, Levi said, letters were mailed anonymously by FBI agents—two to Mafia figures, one to a union local, and one to The Worker, the Communist Party newspaper.

One letter was mailed to a Mafia figure. It included an article which the FBI had written "to appear as if it were written by Communist Party USA officials" and it attacked labor practices at the Mafia figure's business.

Another letter, "written to appear as if it came from the Communist Party USA," was sent to three Mafia figures. The letter denounced them "for their alleged part in a bombing of Communist Party USA headquarters in New York," Levi said

The letter to The Worker, apparently never published, criticized organized crime.

The fourth letter, to a union local, said the "Communist Party had been instructed to work for the elimination of organized crime in the union," Levi said.

Asked the purpose of the program against the Communist Party and the Mafia figures, Havel said it was "just to have them sort of disrupt each other." Asked if the FBI intended that one or both groups would commit acts of violence against the other, Havel said, "To my knowledge, I don't think that was the purpose."

The activities against the Pureto Rican independence groups, which involved 37 separate actions from August, 1960, to April, 1971, included more mailings by FBI agents to individuals or groups. In all instances, Havel said he believed that the information sent by the FBI agents was true.

Among the examples cited by Levi was a letter to two members of an independence group stating that a group leader and a member were having a "love affair." Levi said the letter also was mailed to a "local news medium."

Another instance cited by Levi was the mailing of 300 copies of a flyer stating that an independence group had mishandled group funds.

The activities against the Puerto Rican groups also included release of information by the FBI to the news media to embarrass the groups and persons associated with them.

Havel said the late FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover, was aware of each of the five programs that Levi disclosed.

Levi said in his letter to Rodino—copies of which were sent to the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate Judiciary and intelligence committees—that the five files were discovered after then-Attorney General William B. Saxbe testified before a House Judiciary subcommittee last November.